DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 240 345 CE 038 258

TITLE Study of Work Project. Final Report, 1982-83.
INSTITUTION Paterson Board of Education, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY New Jersey State Dept. of Education, Trenton. Div. of Vocational Education and Career Preparation.
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 24p.; For a related document, see CE 038 259.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Choice; Career Development; *Career Education; Career Exploration; *Classroom Techniques; Community Education; Decision Making Skills; *Education Work Relationship; *Experiential Learning; High Schools; *Learning Activities; Prevocational Education; Program Development; Program Implementation; School Business Relationship; *Teaching Methods; Work Experience Programs
IDENTIFIERS Study of Work Project

ABSTRACT

The Study of Work Project implemented an experience-based prevocational career education program with 785 students from Eastside High School in Paterson, New Jersey. The emphasis of this approach was on developing connections between skill acquisitions in the classroom and skill application in occupational settings. The grant funded a community resource person who trained 33 teachers (1) to infuse work as a topic of study into course content; (2) to develop and implement classroom-based experiential learning activities, and (3) to implement community-based experiential learning about work roles. Evaluation results support the successful implementation of project objectives. Project ideas were to be continued and expanded to all teachers at Eastside High School during the 1983-84 school year. (Author/KC)

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NJ#313209

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FINAL REPORT

OF

STUDY OF WORK PROJECT

1982-83

Paterson School District
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Paterson, New Jersey 07505

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CONTENTS

Introduction.....i

Abstract.....ii

Disclaimer.....iii

Need and Problem.....1

Related Research.....2

Objectives.....4

Procedures.....5

Evaluation Plan.....6

Findings and Interpretation of Findings.....7

Level I.....7

Level II.....10

Level III.....13

Dissemination Activities.....14

Sex Bias and Role Stereotyping.....15

Conclusion.....16

Recommendations.....17

Bibliography

Appendices

Teachers involved in a federal project at Eastside agreed that orientation of the curriculum to work could be a feasible and viable method to attain curriculum objectives while developing realistic career aspirations and aims in students. This decision would introduce greater relevancy into the curriculum, and increase student interest and involvement in the learning process.

It soon became apparent that the options chosen for career orientation, both classroom and out of the classroom activities required resources, co-ordination and support. Teachers needed the "how, what, when and where" to successfully implement the planned strategies. Given the demands of the classroom, the curriculum and the school climate, it was unrealistic to expect that it would happen without the leadership of an individual, a program co-ordinator who possessed the background knowledge, the commitment, the motivation and the time necessary.

Thus was borne the idea of the Study of Work Project.

Audrey Favors
Vice Principal

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IDENTIFICATION NO. SEMG 330 AMOUNT FUNDED $16,464.00

FUNDED UNDER SECTION 132 OF P. L. 94-482

PROJECT TITLE: STUDY OF WORK

LEGAL NAME OF APPLICANT DISTRICT, INSTITUTION OR AGENCY: Eastside High School

ADDRESS: 150 Park Avenue
Paterson, New Jersey

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ABSTRACT

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

(Use this sheet and no more than one other to type in single-spaced form a statement of project objectives, procedures that were followed, state and local priorities emphasized and the expected contribution of the project to vocational education.)

The Study of Work Project implemented on experience based prevocational career education program with 785 students from Eastside High School, Paterson, N.J. The emphasis of this approach was on developing connections between skill acquisition in the classroom and skill application in occupational settings.

The grant funded a community resource person who trained thirty-three teachers to (1) infuse work as a topic of study into course content, (2) to develop and implement classroom based experiential learning activities about work roles and (3) to implement community-based experiential learning about work roles.

Evaluation results support the successful implementation of project objectives. Project ideas will be continued and expanded to all teachers at Eastside High School in the 1983-84 school year.

This project reported herein was conducted pursuant to a contract from the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Vocational Education and Career Preparation. It was funded under Section 132 of Public Law 94-482.

Project Duration: July 1, 1982
Beginning Date

June 30, 1983
Ending Date

The Contractors undertaking this project were encouraged to express fully their judgments in professional and technical matters. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official funding agency positions or policies.

STUDY OF WORK PROJECT

NEED AND PROBLEM

Though the situation is currently improving, fully one-fourth of New Jersey's students, for one reason or another, leave school prior to graduation. A large percentage of these dropouts are urban adolescents with little knowledge of skills, attitudes, and values required for productive employment in the state. More importantly, many of these dropouts enter the job market, and the unemployment rolls, with both limited skills and limited understanding of occupational options. Considerable research indicates, however, that such adolescents can develop essential skills and understanding when provided with expanded prevocational career education opportunities.

It has become clear that many students - particularly those who are nongoal oriented, who are alienated, or who have academic, socioeconomic, or other handicaps - require prevocational career education opportunities that extend beyond the basic classroom infusion level. One promising approach provides these special students with learning opportunities that are concrete, community based, and experiential in nature. This Experience-Based Prevocational Career Education (EBPCE) emphasizes linkages between skill acquisition in the classroom and skill application in occupational settings. Special learners are provided with structured work-site experiences that become both motivational catalyst and meaningful framework for developing skills, attitudes, and values required for lifelong learning and employability.

Crucial components of such a career education program include:

1. the study of work in classrooms and occupational settings;
2. opportunities for developing social and interpersonal communication skills;

3. the innovative use of community resource persons;
4. participation in community involvement projects;
5. opportunities for active career exploration;
6. options for small group and contracted learning; and
7. practice in career decision making and problem solving.

Several problems impede the implementation of such a program:

- Systematic structures for coordinating community resources to aid classroom teachers do not exist in most schools.

- Training and technical assistance have not been available for teachers to gain expertise in design, delivery, and evaluation of experiential learning.

- Since teaching continues to be an isolated affair, both administrative and peer support for such programs remain minimal. Colleague coaching, ongoing technical assistance, group problem solving, information sharing, and local newsletters are infrequently used for supportive purposes.

This proposal addressed the technical assistance and support needed by teachers and counselors to implement and maintain Experience-Based Prevocational Career Education programs for adolescent learners. Project focus was on providing urban adolescents with increased opportunities for making crucial linkages between the classroom and the world of work within freshman and sophomore classes at Eastside High School, Paterson, N.J.

RELATED RESEARCH

Search and review of related literature and research revealed considerable interest in Experience-Based Career Education. Nationally commissioned panels (Brown, 1975; Martin, 1976) concluded that community-based and experiential career education should be integrated with school curricula. Work-Education Councils in twenty-eight states strive to facilitate this integration. Even the National Association of Secondary Schools Principals engaged in a major effort to foster what they called "action learning" with the publication of 25 Action Learning Schools in 1974. One year later NASSP asserted in Secondary Schools in a Changing Society "The purpose of community based learning is to offer youth a wide variety

of opportunities to learn in the public world to test theory and practice, to assume a partnership with adults to deliver upon the responsibilities of consequence, to gain a mutuality with other age and ethnic groups to participate in solving problems rather than merely talking about solutions, and to gain a greater understanding of the possibilities and limitations of society's institutions and the people they serve." (NASSP, 1975).

Comprehensive studies of Experience-Based Career Education found that participating students expressed greater knowledge of and more positive attitudes toward careers, developed greater self confidence interpersonal skills, were less likely to have negative or unrealistic views of adult life, and were more likely to report both greater sense of direction and knowledge of how to achieve the goals (Evenson, 1979; Owens 1979; Musselman, 1978; Handler, 1978). Conrad and Hedin (1980) in a follow-up study of 4,000 high school student participants determined that significant positive affective change is indeed initiated by experiential education and that participation may enhance cognitive development.

Related projects supported in the past by New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Vocational Education and Career Preparation also provide the foundation for this proposal. The Occupational Projection Research Project has gathered valuable information from the private sector regarding perceptions of important skills, attitudes, and values. The Career-Vocational Development Goal Matrix with accompanying assessment indicators and instructional activities provides useful classroom based information.

Further, a guide to business and industry resources that aid teachers with opportunities for work site visitations, classroom speakers, and other opportunities is available.

Not only is there strong support for Experience Based Prevocational Career Education from national leaders in the field, there is also considerable research

evidence regarding the efficacy of such an approach with special learners.

OBJECTIVES

The proposed project, The Study of Work supplemented a comprehensive research project (Youth Development Project) concurrently conducted in Eastside High School. The project directly affected 400-500 Freshman and 200-300 Sophomores, and provided training and assistance to thirty-three teachers. Further description of the content of Study of Work can be found in the procedures section.

Specific objectives of the project were:

1. Facilitate development of school based systematic proecdures for coordinating community resources that aid teachers in the classroom.

2. Facilitate development of an internal support system that included:

    a. colleague coaching and technical assistance,
    b. local newsletter.

3. Provide training and ongoing technical assistance to develop staff expertise in;

    a. design, delivery, evaluation of experiential learning,
    b. interactive teaching and student involvement,
    c. innovative use of community resource persons,
    d. use of peer teaching about personal work roles,
    e. teaching of career decision making and career problem solving.
    f. use of student team learning projects,
    g. use of contract learning,
    h. use of small group learning and community involvement projects,
    i. instructional use of group visits to work sites,
    j. design and use of ½ day shadow experiences, and
    k. effective approaches to training and staff development.

Project students will:

1. demonstrate greater knowledge of and more positive attitudes toward careers,

2. exhibit increased decision making and problem solving ability,

3. demonstrate improved interpersonal skills and attitudes,

4. demonstrate an awareness of skills, attitudes, and values considered to be important by regional employers,

5. exhibit greater responsibility, time management and organizational skills, and independence,

6. exhibit greater motivation for learning and participating in school and community experiences.

PROCEDURES

A: General Design

The project proceeded on three levels; infusion of work as a topic of study, classroom-based experiential learning about work roles, and community-based experiential learning about work roles.

Level 1: Infusion of Work as Topic of Study

a. In presenting the regular curriculum, teachers emphasized the relevance of the subject matter to work roles and referred to contributions made by individuals in work roles. Students encountered direct and explicit descriptions of problems related to work and work roles.

Level 2: Classroom-Based Experiential Learning about Work Roles

b. Community resource people visited project classrooms to discuss their occupations as they related to ongoing course content. Students were oriented prior to visits and participated in follow up activities and discussions.

c. One teacher functioned as a community resource coordinator and developed a community resource center for teacher use. Examples of infusion activities were made available.

d. Teachers and counselors served as colleague coaches to provide on-going technical assistance and support. Meetings were held once per week for this purpose with ongoing TA occuring as needed throughout the week.

e. Students were given the opportunity to share with peers their experiences which are related to work or work roles; they organized and presented individual or panel reports about these experiences. Each student was provided opportunities for such activities.

f. Students participated in decision making units within the existing curriculum. In these units, students assessed work roles in terms of costs and benefits associated with these roles. Student's interests, aspirations and skills were made relevant to the roles discussed. The decision making process unit was provided once for each project class, but reinforcement occurred as needed.

g. With faculty guidance, students in the project classes organized and completed individual or small group learning contracts. Contracts specified learning objectives for experiential learning activities that related directly to course content. Initial contracts involved in-school research, later ones involved research and interviews in the community. A minimum of two such learning contract opportunities were to be afforded each project student.

Level 3: Community-Based Experiential Learning about Work Roles

h. Teachers in project classrooms prepare students for community based learning activities through training in basic communication skills and through orientation to work place realities and expectations. The goal of these activities was to enable students to approach community learning experiences with competence and confidence.

i. Students help plan and participate in field trips to observe and interview workers in occupational settings which are relevant to course curricula. Such visitations were to occur a minimum of three times for each project student.

j. Students plan and participate in small group, community based learning experiences. This may be done in conjunction with a contract or a panel report to the class. One experience was to be provided for project students.

k. Students were to participate in individual one-half day shadow experiences. These experiences allow students to follow a worker through responsibilities of an occupation in which students are interested. At least two shadow experiences were to be provided each project student.

EVALUATION PLAN

Project evaluation was both formative and summative. The purpose was to gather ongoing information regarding improvement strategies, effective implementation strategies, and project impact.

Evaluation data was derived from interviews, observations, and student records. Sources of information included parents, students, teachers, and administrators. Data was collected by community resource person. Each program objective was addressed.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

As noted in the procedures section, the project proceeded on three levels. Each level of program is discussed in turn with examples of implementation and impact documented through interviews, observation, or project records.

Level 1: Infusion of Work as Topic of Study

Thirty-three teachers were trained in career education infusion techniques. The degree to which these teachers actually mastered infusion techniques and systematically used these techniques in their classrooms was evaluated through classroom observations. Due to attrition and scheduling difficulties twenty-eight program teachers were observed on a rotating basis. In total, 299 observations were made between November 1982 and May 1983. In a typical week between 13 and 14 observations were made. All observations were made by on-site researchers as part of the LEAA program evaluation.

The key classroom observation statistic used to evaluate the effectiveness of infusion techniques was the number of work related examples used in instruction. For the 299 observations, a total of 1604 examples of work relationships were noted by the observers. Teachers averaged 5.36 occupation related examples per lesson.

To explain the importance of this statistic a brief summary of infusion follows;

> In presenting the traditional curriculum, teachers briefly refer to how work roles relate to the subject being taught. As students begin to see connections between what they're learning and their career futures, their motivation for being in school often increases.

Career education is infused into the curriculum in a number of different ways. For example, teachers infuse career education by:

i. Using "warm up" or mental set activities tied to career information.

ii. Taking advantage of opportunities to refer to work roles whenever possible -- remarks to the class, references to a bulletin board display.

iii. Providing ditto materials (and extension activities) for those who finish early.

iv. Using when regular homework assignment isn't appropriate.

A wealth of techniques were initiated by the program coordinator to make staff aware of infusion techniques and to keep interest high.

Hundreds of ideas were developed and disseminated through brief notes on infusion to entire lesson plans. These notes were distributed to staff via flyers, a regular newsletter, bulletin boards, word of mouth and any way possible.

In addition, a quarterly newsletter was published called "Pie-Eneer". Each issue of the newsletter contained articles about career day, career activities, lesson ideas, and other reminders concerning career education activities. A "Career Ed Freebie News" also provided information regarding free resources to aid teachers in the classroom.

Further, monthly meetings were held with all program teachers to plan activities, provide follow up training, and to serve as implementation problem solving sessions. These were in addition to weekly meetings held with school program coordinators concerning project activities, next steps for implementation, and assessment of current efforts.

Finally, a career interest survey was developed and distributed to the 785 participating students and to all other students at Eastside. Over 2,000 were returned. The survey asked students to identify three career interests (out of 153) for which they would like some additional information. The information was then keyed into an Apple II computer and made available to teachers and others. Guest speakers and career lessons were based on the information gathered through this survey.

In summary, a range of valuable techniques were used to infuse career education concepts and materials into the regular classroom program. It is clear that efforts to implement this level of the project met with considerable success.

Level 2: Classroom-Based Experiential Learning About Work Roles

A number of separate activities were planned to introduce more in-depth activities to teachers and students. Each will be discussed in turn.

b. Visits by Community resource people to project classrooms

This objective was carried out primarily through a Career Day activity held on April 22. Planned and implemented in collaboration with the Eastside High School science, math, and guidance departments, Career Day brought into the school well over 100 resource persons from business, industry, and government. The computerized student career information file was used to identify appropriate resources of particular interest to students Follow-up questionnaires indicated the program was a success, as the comments below demonstrate:

Students

1. Was Career Day interesting?
   *46% said it was very good
   *another 30% said it was good

2. Was the purpose of speaker presentations clear?
   *78% said the purposes were very clear.

3. How well prepared was the speakers?
   *81% said the speakers were very well prepared.

Guest Speakers

1. How would you rate your overall experience?
   *100% considered the day as successful or very successful.

Teacher Evaluation

1. How would you rate Career Day?
   *77% considered the day as positive or very positive.

Over 375 student, teacher and speaker evaluations have been collected. Students expressed interest in having many of the speakers return and to have Career Day on a school-wide basis as an annual event. "All of the students seemed stimulated and interested in increasing their career awareness. It was an extremely rewarding day," said Mr. Gerald Nealson, of the Taylor Business Institute. Petty Officer First Class Melvin Martin stated: "I have to commend

the school's administrators, students, and teachers for the tremendous strides Eastside has made toward quality education and enlightenment of one's career options." The Principal of Eastside High School, Joe Clark, said, "As an event, Career Day was the most professionally conducted and the largest in scope that I have ever seen in a school."

c. Development of a community resource center for teacher use

This center was developed and numerous career education materials were developed. What is more important, in-school dissemination of materials and concepts was extremely successful. This was the key to adaptation. Technical assistance, career education materials, and a wide range of resources were made available. In addition, video-tapes of infusion, decision making, and related lessons were made and disseminated through the center.

d. Teachers and counselors served as colleague coaches to provide on-going technical assistance and support

This aspect of the program was carried out with many teachers observing their colleagues and providing technical feedback regarding the impact of observed practices. The major difficulty with coaching at Eastside was the need to provide coverage so one project teacher could visit a colleague's class. The Project Coordinator often provided the needed coverage as did coaches and others involved with the Project. In practicing their new role, teacher-coaches assisted colleagues by 1)providing resources, materials, and information for lesson preparation, 2)observing and recording classroom practices, and 3)providing feedback and follow-up technical assistance.

e. Student sharing of experiences which were related to work or work roles

This activity was also carried out in many classes. Lesson suggestions were distributed by the program coordinator to all teachers.

f. Students participate in decision-making units within the existing curriculum

During the week of November 8-10, the decision-making unit was presented to ninth and tenth grade project students. These presentations were made by the Math and Business department members. Over 100 students were observed receiving instruction in the seven-step decision-making process.

Additionally, nine classes were observed where the decision-making unit was discussed and reviewed by students. As one observer reports;

> "The variety of strategies used to teach decision-making was inspiring to observe. Teachers administered a pre-test to determine who knew the process for decision-making without new input. Input was given in many forms. One teacher presented value dilemmas that students had to deal with. Group analysis of the problems using the decision-making process followed. These judgments were presented to the class in summary form. Another teacher choose to make a direct link between mathematical problem-solving and the decision-making process. Modeling this process, the teacher universalized examples from Math into career exploration decisions. Another teacher choose to present the class with a work related problem, divided the class into groups, and entertained group decisions on the problems presented."

g. Individual or Small group learning contracts

Although a good idea, the use of individual or small group learning contracts was limited. The primary reason for limited use of this technique was the intense push given to basic skills improvement on the part of the new school administration. Teachers were under considerable pressure to "stick to the curriculum" and "emphasize basics." Infusing career education worked; extensive additions to the regular curriculum did not.

In summary, Level 2 approaches were, for the most part, successfully implemented by the program teachers with assistance from coaches, community resource persons, and the project coordinator.

Level 3: Community-based Experiential Learning About work roles

h. Teachers prepare students for community based learning activities through training in basic communication skills and through orientation to work place realities and expectations

The goal of these activities was to enable students to approach community learning experiences with competence and confidence.

Material was developed and distributed to staff and lessons were carried out by program teachers as per proposal. Essentially, this aspect of the project focused on use of cooperative learning procedures which enable students to work in teams and cooperatively complete lesson assignments, achieve learning objectives, and receive rewards for their work.

i. Students help plan and participate in field trips to observe and interview workers in occupational settings.

This objective was hard to achieve for more than a handful of students (approximately 150). Again, the primary problem was not a lack of ability or willingness to achieve the objective on the part of the project manager. The problem was the conflicting goals -- basic skills or the career education objective. Only a limited number of students were able to leave the building and be excused from regular classes.

Within the restrictions, a number of trips were planned and carried out.

1. Future Unlimited Conference - all day career conference for women.
2. Field trip to Automatic Data Processing.
3. Field trip to I.B.M.
4. Field trip to Union Corporation
5. Field trip to New Jersey Bell.

j. Students plan and participate in small group- community based learning experiences

This objective was not achieved. Again, renewed school focus on basic skills achievement and difficulties in scheduling interfered with successful

implementation of this strategy. Preparations, however, for 1983-1984 implementation were thorough.

k. Students participate in one-half day shadow experience

Activities to meet this objective were also severely limited by the renewed Eastside High School initiative to improve the quality of student achievement. As a result only a few shadow experiences were implemented. In addition long range planning and preparation proved to be crucial for successful experiences of this nature and involved considerably more time in community and teacher education than initially anticipated.

Thus with only ten (10) project students participating in such activities, this objective was not met. Nevertheless, long range preparations have been completed, facilitating mechanisms are in place, and commitment to take on students for shadowing experiences has been secured from business, industry, and other community resources; implementation during 1983-1984 should proceed smoothly.

In summary, Level III objectives were the most difficult to achieve because of school focus on increasing student learning as well as unanticipated preparation and implementation difficulties. Despite the fact that objectives were essentially uncompleted through the shadowing experiences, much was accomplished and a foundation exists to significantly increase levels of implementation in subsequent years.

DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES

There are two immediate dissemination plans. (1) the project will be expanded to the remaining staff at Eastside High School (2) there are plans to extend the program to John F. Kennedy High School (the other Paterson, N.J. high school).

Written materials have been developed in large quantity and high quality. These materials can be made available to other school professionals interested in initiating a project such as this, and will be compiled into an implementation handbook.

Sex Bias and Sex Role Stereotyping

The following strategies were used to eliminate sex bias and sex role stereotyping in the project:

1. references to occupations in sexist terms were avoided;

2. skills, attitudes, and values developed by the project were not associated with a particular sex;

3. learning experiences, instructional strategies, and evaluation procedures were appropriate for both sexes; and

4. staff inservice training include of components on sex bias and sex role stereotyping.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded without question, this project achieved its goals. Efforts at infusion and classroom/school-based experiential learning met with considerable success. Further, many high quality materials were produced and much interest and awareness of occupational roles and requirements engendered in staff and students alike. The renewed basic skills improvement initiative at Eastside High School hampered, but did not preclude, some success at shadowing, community-based experiences, and long term student projects. It is important to note that objectives which were met by this project (and most were) were met very well. Many additional accomplishments (e.g., after school career clubs) were not called for in the initial proposal.

A note of caution concerning the "relative ease" with which project goals were achieved: The Study of Work Project had access to the resources of a vastly larger Federal project at Eastside and to the resources and expertise of The Educational Improvement Center - Northwest. Such resources are not available to most projects of this nature, and it is impossible to estimate the extent to which such resources insured project success. There is little doubt, however, that the lack of such resources would have increased significant difficulties with implementation. The collaborative support from the State Department of Education, the Federal government, EIC-NW, and the Eastside High School professional team proved to be effective.

Illustrating the efficacy of this project i the recent action by the District of Paterson to increase support for the position of Community Resource Coordinator (Nancy Mitchell) to facilitate expansion of project activities throughout Eastside High School and to John F. Kennedy, Paterson's second high school. The Study of Work Project, then, has been successful and will continue to provide valuable career related educational experiences to the

students of Paterson subsequent to cessation of State and Federal funding support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

1. The project be refunded to continue the excellent job started in the 1982-83 school year.
2. Project activities should be expanded to the remaining students in Eastside High School and to students at John F. Kennedy High School.
3. Those activities abbreviated due to emphasis on basic skills be reintroduced to the program through cooperative efforts among all school personnel.
4. Further effort be extended to prepare a brief manual which could be used by other schools interested in replicating the project.

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